AN

ORATION,

DELIVERED AT

WETHERSFIELD,

FEBRUARY 22, 1800;

ON THE DEATH OF

GENERAL

GEORGE WASHINGTON,

WHO DIED DECEMBER 14, 1799.

BY EBENEZER GRANT MARSH.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

Nature can't bring in every period forth,
A finiſh'd hero, of exalted worth,
Whoſe godlike genius, towering and ſublime,
Muſt long lie ripening in the womb of time:
Before a WASHINGTON comes on the ſtage,
The birth of years, and labor of an age.
In field, and council, born the palm to ſhare,
His voice a ſenate, as his ſword a war;
And each illuſtrious action of his life,
Conſpire to form the patriot, and the chief.

PITT.

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1800.

BRITISH MUSEUM

AN

ORATION.

FELLOW CITIZENS,

UNITED AMERICA aſſemble this day to pay their laſt reſpects to the admired hero and ſage, the father of his country, the friend of mankind. He hath reſigned his ſpirit into the hand of his maker. "He lives only in his own great actions, and in the hearts of an affectionate and afflicted people."

A FAITHFUL hiſtory of his life, and an impartial delineation of his public and private virtues, would be the only eulogy worthy of WASHINGTON. But who can define that ſublime philoſophy which directed and animated all his actions—his genius enriched with information and fruitful in reſources—his wiſely concerted and well executed plans! Who can deſcribe his purity of morals, dignity of manners, mildneſs and equanimity, patience in adverſity and moderation in proſperity, firmneſs in danger and perſeverance in difficulties! If, in the ſketch of his hiſtory and character, a ſtrong affection for the man ſhould appear, blended with a reverence for his talents, your candor and the ſympathy of your feelings will be the ſpeaker's apology.

This day completes ſixty eight years ſince the pariſh of Waſhington, in the county of Weſtmoreland, in Virginia, gave birth to this great man. He was educated by private inſtruction. An excellent underſtanding early convinced him of the advantages of virtue, the pleaſure of knowledge, and the neceſſity of labor. An uncommon mildneſs and moderation of temper preſerved him from the aſſaults of paſſion, and the allurements of vice. By the natural ſtrength and ſuperiority of his genius, without experience, he broke out at once a general and a hero. At the age of twenty-three, he was ſent, by his native ſtate, with the command of four hundred men againſt the French, in the vicinity of the Ohio, who had committed many acts of hoſtility againſt the Britiſh ſubjects. Attacked at Redſtone, by an army nearly four times as numerous as his own, valiant as Achilles, he made a brave defence, killed two hundred of the enemy, and obliged the French to grant him an honorable capitulation. The maſterly manner in which he ſoon after covered the retreating army of Gen. Braddock, drew upon him the higheſt encomiums from his country. Through the whole of that war, he diſplayed an energy of character, which preſaged, that he might be deſigned by Providence for a future ſaviour of his country.

In the Congreſs of 1775 he was diſtinguiſhed by every deference, which ſuperior merit is ſure to receive from noble minds. He felt an early indignation at the oppreſſions of the Britiſh. The com-

mand of her armies being intruſted to him by his country, he accepted it from duty, relinquiſhing the enjoyments of affluence, and the higheſt domeſtic felicity. Having no intereſted views, the friends of liberty repoſed the higheſt confidence in his abilities and integrity. How well this confidence was placed, every page of our revolution bears glorious atteſtation. What difficulties did he not encounter? What danger did he decline? Who has marked his fortitude in the hour of adverſity, without hoping relief from his prudence? Who has beheld him in battle, without confiding in the wiſdom of his arrangements, and repoſing on the valor of his arm? Who, among his followers, did not find his ſufferings ſolaced in ſeeing them ſhared by his chief? Thoſe can beſt deſcribe his military character, who followed him in his expeditions, who ſtudied his marches, his encampments, his diſpoſitions before a battle, and his courage in the heat of conflict; who beheld him penetrating, at a glance, the projects of the enemy, multiplying around them almoſt inevitable ambuſhes, creating and preſerving a happy diſcipline in his army, exciting, by new and efficacious methods, the ardor of his ſoldiers, and unremittingly exerting himſelf for their preſervation.

To view him as a perfect model of military greatneſs, to rank him with the greateſt generals of any age, is no amplification. In him were blended activity, vigilance, great force of judgment, and never failing preſence of mind. He could unite in-

formation with talents, reflection with experience, and ſtratagem with glory. Cautious, ſyſtematic, and inflexible, his genius was ſingularly adapted to our revolutionary war. Diſtinguiſhing, with preciſion, the difference between great difficulties and impoſſibilities, and never diſcouraged by the former, he often appeared to execute the latter. Indefatigably laborious and active, coolly intrepid in action, he diſcerned as by intuition, ſeized with rapidity, and improved with ſkill, the favorable, and often deciſive, moments of battle. Never tranſported by the enthuſiaſm of patriotiſm, never deluded by the ardor of courage, he preferred ſtratagem to action, and victory to glory. Modeſt and magnanimous after victory, he became the generous protector of his ſubdued and captive enemies. Reſolute and undejected in misfortunes, he roſe ſuperior to diſtreſſes, and ſurmounted difficulties, which no courage, no conſtancy, but his own, would have reſiſted. His letters, during his moſt gloomy proſpects, announce a hero, conſcious of his danger, but ſtill deriving a well grounded hope from the reſources of his own mind. His valor was never unequal to his duty or the occaſion. He attempted great things with means that appeared totally inadequate, and ſucceſsfully proſecuted what he had boldly reſolved. He was never diſheartened by difficulties, but had that vigor of mind, which, inſtead of bending to oppoſition, riſes above it, and ſeems to have a power of controling even fortune itſelf. His character combined a cool and penetrating judgment and prompt deciſion, caution and

intrepidity, patience and enterpriſe, generous tenderneſs and compaſſion, with undaunted heroiſm. He was a never failing reſource to thoſe who wanted his aſſiſtance. No one could have more happily concentrated the confidence of his troops. Their obedience was leſs owing to the authority of his poſt, than to their opinion of his valor; ſo attached to him were the officers and ſoldiers, that if a principle of duty and virtue had not ſecured their obedience to their country, gratitude and reſpect for their general would have confirmed it. Even when worn out with fatigue they were ever ready to execute his orders, and no danger could intimidate them when they were commanded by WASHINGTON. He himſelf always ſhared in the toils he was obliged to impoſe, viſited in perſon the ſick and the wounded, and expreſſed, on every occaſion, the greateſt regard for a body of men, whoſe welfare was ſo cloſely connected with that of his country. By the ſtricteſt rules he labored to inſpire them with a ſenſe of duty, and neglected no circumſtance which might render them formidable to their enemies. He was eloquent, perſuaſive, ſtrong, and pathetic, as occaſion required. He had arguments and tears at his command. In a word, he was a general formed by heaven for juſt ſuch a period, country, and cauſe, as ours. And you too well know to be informed, that his great talents and patriotiſm, his equally judicious and vigorous meaſures, effected the ſalvation of his country, and commanded the admiration and applauſe of the whole world.

After the ratification of a treaty of peace, which ſatisfied our moſt ſanguine wiſhes and expectations, he reſigned his commiſſion, enjoying the pleaſing hope of ſpending the reſidue of his days in the retreats and occupations of private life. Having paſſed in a rapid revolution from the dangers of ſlavery to the poſſeſſion of liberty, the whole country, in the tranſports of gratitude, forgot their own mighty exertions, the influence of general cauſes, and the irreſiſtible energy of man fighting for freedom, and aſcribed their ſucceſs to the virtues and talents of Washington.

The character of this great man would be impaired by a compariſon with the moſt diſtinguiſhed generals either of ancient or modern times. *Alexander*, *Charles* of Sweden, and *Kouli Khan*, were born with an inſatiable thirſt for human blood, and habituated, from their infancy, to the moſt inhuman actions. Their immoderate ambition made them the ſcourge of mankind and the peſt of the world.—*Hannibal's* talents and victories were tarniſhed by cruelty, treachery, and a total diſregard to truth, honor, and morality.—*Julius Cæſar* was provident in council, fearleſs in action, humane and generous to exceſs; but his glory was ſullied by an inordinate love of pleaſure, and an unbounded ambition. His great talents would have made him the firſt citizen of Rome; but he diſdained the condition of a ſubject. The great object of his life was to rule, and Cato very juſtly remarked, that "he came, with ſobriety and meditation, to the ſubverſion

of the republic."—None ever exhibited greater bravery in dangerous undertakings, or more preſence of mind and conduct in their execution, than *Trajan*; but the praiſes of Alexander, blazoned by a ſucceſſion of panegyriſts, kindled a dangerous emulation in his mind. "Like him," ſays Gibbon, "the Roman emperor undertook an expedition againſt the nations of the eaſt; but he lamented, with a ſigh, that his advanced age ſcarcely left him any hopes of equalling the renown of the ſon of Phillip."—*Charles the firſt* of France, *Edward the third* of England, and the Emperor *Charles the fifth*, diſplayed aſtoniſhing military talents, and were not leſs illuſtrious in the cabinet than in the field. But the firſt wantonly maſſacred 4500 Saxons ſolely for their loyalty to their prince. He appeared to regard truth, juſtice, and humanity, only as importunate monitors, which ſhould be kept at a diſtance, or puniſhed for their intruſion. The love of glory was the ruling paſſion of the two laſt, to the gratification of which they ſacrificed the intereſts of their country, and every ſentiment of humanity.—*Frederick the ſecond* and the *Duke of Marlborough* were, perhaps, perfect maſters of the military art. Having been, from their childhood, continually in war, and at the head of armies, they joined to all the capacity which genius could give, all the knowledge and ſkill which experience could teach. But the former "ſlaughtered the armies of half the nations of Europe, merely to extend the limits of an electorate," and, being an open conſpirator againſt the religion of JESUS, infected the world with his impieties—the

latter, hurried to exceſs by the violence of his paſſions, was much leſs fitted to prevent evils by his wiſe precautions, than to remedy them by his vigor and enterpriſe.

None of theſe heroes could claim the aſſemblage of coolneſs and ſpirit, humanity and munificence, prudence and vigor, patient unſhaken conſtancy, untainted patriotiſm and ſuperiority to popular clamor, which diſtinguiſhed the Father of our country. None of them eſtabliſhed the freedom and independence of his nation; or exchanged the inſtruments of war for the implements of huſbandry; or was rewarded by the honeſt pride of virtue, the exquiſite delight of beholding the general happineſs of which he was the author. The commanders of armies are taught, by the example of Washington, that well earned military applauſes may be preſerved, without power or ſplendor, in private life.

Restored to his endeared retirement, and to thoſe rural occupations which conſtituted his greateſt enjoyment, he was ſcarcely permitted to repoſe from the fatigues of the war, when the imperious voice of his country again ſummoned him to her aſſiſtance. The confederation, formed under the preſſure of foreign war and domeſtic diſtreſs, was found incompetent to the ends propoſed, and both the honor and happineſs of the United States required a reformation. For this purpoſe a convention was called in the year 1787, of which he was choſen Preſident. His opinions and example, at this

time, largely contributed to a ſpirit of national accommodation, and ſecured an harmonious acquieſcence in our preſent ſyſtem of federal government. Invited by his fellow-citizens to organize and adminiſter this government, he complied, without balancing a moment between perſonal conſiderations and public duty. His acceptance was the preſage of a proſperity, which was to remedy the evils of internal diſſenſions and a feeble government. Clinging to him as the anchor of their hope, the people were not diſappointed. Of the ability and integrity with which he diſcharged the functions of this high and arduous office, the public voice and public regret bear ample and merited teſtimony. It may, indeed, be truly ſaid, that the annals of no nation record a ſeries of ſervices, commenſurate in their conſequences, with thoſe, which he rendered his country, during his adminiſtration. To an unextinguiſhed ardor for the public good, he joined a perſeverance in the purſuit of it, which ſubdued all obſtacles. His genius, adequate to every trying occaſion, appeared to expand as difficulties occurred. His diſcerning judgment filled the ſeveral departments of ſtate with officers of approved merit, with whom he invariably conſulted, before he officially decided, on buſineſs of moment to his country. His well timed and efficient meaſures preſerved us from the deſolation and horrors of foreign and domeſtic war. Under his adminiſtration, the excellent organization of the different branches of the federal conſtitution, the judicious appointments, and the energy applied to all its operations, gave it a baſis which ſecured the happineſs and proſperity of our country.

In no ſituation did Washington appear more truly great than at the helm of our federal government. Here he diſplayed an aſtoniſhing extent and preciſion of political talents, a diſintereſted integrity, an incorruptible heart, a conſtant attention to the grand principles of rational liberty, and an invariable attachment to his country. His genius was equal to the moſt enlarged views, and minute details, of civil policy. A vigorous mind, improved by the experience and ſtudy of mankind, dexterity and application in buſineſs, a judicious mixture of liberality and œconomy, ſteadineſs to purſue his ends, and flexibility to vary his means, marked his adminiſtration. He guided the paſſions of others, becauſe he was maſter of his own. Had his character and feelings been more fervid, his conduct might not have been ſo exemplary, nor his glory ſo exalted and permanent. Patriotic from principle, and temperate from conſtitution, he neither diſdained nor ſought elevation; but always retained a humility, which demonſtrated, even to political jealouſy, that a man, capable of bearing ſo many honors, fully deſerved them. He was provident without timidity, ſevere in the execution of juſtice without rigor, moderate when his own intereſts were the ſubject of diſcuſſion, and inflexibly firm when thoſe of his country were in queſtion. He ſtood a rock in the midſt of the ocean, receiving unmoved the violence of its waves.

When the revolving period of the third election of a Preſident approached, he conſidered that duty no longer demanded a ſacrifice of inclination, and

publiſhed his valedictory addreſs to the people of the United States. In this ſecond reſignation he appears ſuperior to ancient or modern examples. Others have, indeed, relinquiſhed offices of equal truſt; but, generally, the viciſſitudes of fortune, and the diſappointment of their favorite ſchemes, urged them to abdicate a power, which they found inadequate to their ambition.

THE American leader now conſoled himſelf with the reflection, that he had entirely quitted the conſtant anxiety and high reſponſibility of public life. Minds long exerciſed in buſineſs rarely form habits of converſing with themſelves, and, in the loſs of power, principally regret the want of occupation. But retirement was natural and delightful to WASHINGTON. He diſcharged the duties of a private citizen with a condeſcenſion and greatneſs of mind peculiar to himſelf. He had, however, been too long in the public ſervice to enjoy, without diminution, the comforts and ſecurity of retirement. "Angry clouds began to riſe:" And it was impoſſible, that he could be unaffected with the afflictions and dangers of his country. At the public call he again came forward to direct and command our armies, exhibiting another proof of unrivalled greatneſs. On this pinnacle of earthly glory he ſtood, "venerable in ſervices as in years, the cement and bulwark of our nation," till he was ſummoned to join *the armies in heaven.*

THE private character of this great man eminently correſponded with the ſplendor of his pub-

lic reputation. The native ſimplicity of his virtue was a ſtranger to vanity or affectation. He enjoyed, with moderation, the advantages of his fortune, and the innocent pleaſures of ſociety. He was ſevere to himſelf, indulgent to the imperfections of others, juſt and beneficent to all mankind. Sincerity and candor, a true ſenſe of honor, juſtice, and public liberty, appeared to be the inherent principles of his nature, and the uniform rule of his conduct. The largeneſs of his heart equalled that of his fortune. Without thinking of his own greatneſs, without fearing leſt others ſhould forget it, he was eaſy of acceſs, untainted with rancor or jealouſy, and ever ready to liſten to juſt complaints. "He appears," indeed, "to have been the complete model of that perfect character, which, under the denomination of a ſage or a wiſe man, the philoſophers have been fond of delineating, rather as a fiction of their imagination, than in hope of ever ſeeing it reduced to practice—ſo happily were all his virtues tempered together, ſo juſtly were they blended, and ſo powerfully did each prevent the other from exceeding its proper bounds." In a word, cotemporary jealouſy, envy, and malignity, were compelled to applaud both his public and private character, and more impartial poſterity will read it with admiration.

His fortitude, in the laſt ſcene of his invaluable life, gave an illuſtrious ſtamp to the traits he had exhibited. Oppreſſed by grievous pain, he breathed his laſt with the ſublime tranquillity of a good man, conſcious of having devoted his talents to the ſervice of virtue and mankind.

Death loves a ſhining mark, a ſignal blow;
A blow which, while it executes, alarms,
And ſtartles thouſands with a ſignal fall.
Theſe high aim'd darts— ——————
——————ſhould draw the public eye,
The gaze and contemplation of the world!

YOUNG.

SUCH was the man for whom our country mourns. Humanity cannot withhold her tears. We have been deprived of our brighteſt ornament, of the guide and patron, on whoſe wiſdom, experience, and harmonizing influence, we could implicitly rely. To him as the author of our independence, and, while he lived, its firm ſupport, our reverence is particularly due. "He could paſs through no American ſtate, ſurvey no field, and tread on no ſpot of ground, which he did not ſave from devaſtation." He could "mix with no aſſembly, viſit no family, and accoſt no perſon, who muſt not ſay, *Our freedom, our peace, our ſafety, we owe firſt to God, and next to you.*" He could "turn his ear to no ſound of joy, which he had not a ſhare in exciting; and open his eye to no ſcene of comfort, which did not trace him as its origin." Like the central orb of the planetary world, he enlightened and animated, cemented and beautified, our whole political ſyſtem. With a ſkilful, ſteady, yet gentle, hand, he moulded a confuſed maſs of diſcordant materials into one regular and harmonious compound. And by a ſtrictly juſt and paternal adminiſtration, he diffuſed the bleſſings of freedom, tranquillity, public and private proſperity, throughout all claſſes of people.

HAD he been aſked by what poſthumous honors we ſhould beſt commemorate his ſervices, he would

have replied: "Support your government. Reſiſt with care the ſpirit of innovation upon its firſt principles, however ſpecious the pretexts. In all the changes to which you may be invited, remember, particularly, that for the efficient management of your common intereſt, in a country ſo extenſive, a government of as much vigor as is conſiſtent with the perfect ſecurity of rational liberty, is indiſpenſible. Reverence religion and morality. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotiſm, who would labor to ſubvert theſe great pillars of human happineſs, and the firmeſt props of the duties of men and citizens. Promote inſtitutions for the general diffuſion of knowledge. As an important ſource of ſtrength and ſecurity, cheriſh public credit. Cultivate peace and harmony with all nations. Exclude inveterate antipathies againſt ſome, and paſſionate attachments for others. The nation which indulges towards another an habitual hatred or an habitual fondneſs, is a ſlave to its animoſity or to its affection, either of which is ſufficient to pervert it from its duty and intereſt. If I may flatter myſelf, that theſe counſels of an old, affectionate friend may be productive of ſome partial benefit, of ſome occaſional good—that they may ſometimes recur to moderate the fury of party ſpirit, to warn againſt the miſchiefs of foreign influence, and to guard againſt the impoſtures of pretended patriotiſm; this hope will be a full recompence for the ſolicitude for your your welfare by which they have been dictated."*

* See Gen. WASHINGTON's Valedictory Addreſs.

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